

Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education

Integrative Learning for Compassionate Action
in an Interconnected World

February 22-25, 2007

San Francisco, CA

More than 600 faculty members, administrators, student-life professionals, and chaplains from the broad spectrum of American colleges and universities attended the February 22-25 “Uncovering the Heart of Education” conference on integrative learning and spirituality in higher education. The conference was co-sponsored by the Fetzer Institute and California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS).

The Center for Contemplative Mind played a prominent role in the conference: ten of the 49 workshops were organized by the Center and led by Contemplative Practice Fellows; our day-long pre-conference was oversubscribed and filled within a month of the announcement; and a number of Academic Program advisors and summer session participants gave workshops and paper presentations.

The conference drew together theoretical, pedagogical, and relational teaching perspectives from across the nation that support a more holistic approach to education, one founded on a growing recognition of the need for students to integrate their inner selves and outer vocations. Sessions explored the possibilities to make colleges and universities places that awaken the deepest potential in students, faculty, and staff. It was a rich offering with a diversity of topics explored during the weekend. This report offers a summary of the conference purpose and the sessions led by Contemplative Mind staff, fellows, advisors, and summer session participants.

For more about the session, including transcripts from two keynote speakers, Diana Chapman-Walsh (Wellesley College President) and Alexander and Helen Astin (principle investigator’s of the UCLA

“Spirituality in Higher Education” research project), please refer to www.heartofeducation.org.

“The widespread support of the conference affirms the notion that integrative education, including models that connect religion and spirituality to the curricular and co-curricular programs on campus, is very much in the consciousness of higher education,” said CIIS President Joseph Subbiondo.

CONFERENCE PURPOSE

In our densely interconnected world, integrative teaching and learning have never been more important. But between what components of their studies and what dimensions of their person are students asked to make connections? We understand integration within a major, between fields, and even between knowledge and practice. More recently the relationship between curricular and co-curricular activities has received attention. While these and other trends help students and faculty integrate otherwise fragmentary elements of their educational venture, do we go far enough? Do our efforts reach the often unspoken heart of higher education?

The rising interest in integrative learning supports a more holistic approach to education that is founded on a growing recognition of the need for students to integrate their inner lives and their outer vocations. One aim of the conference was to draw together and articulate teaching perspectives from around the world that are theoretical, pedagogical, and relational.

The central question becomes: Do current education efforts address the whole human being—mind, heart, and spirit—in ways that contribute best to our future on this fragile planet? What steps can we take to make our colleges and universities places that awaken the deepest potential in students, faculty, and staff?

Among the topics discussed in the more than 50 facilitated sessions and keynotes addresses:

- the relationship between the curriculum and values
- intellectual, aesthetic, and moral Intelligences
- technical competency and compassionate action
- critical reasoning and contemplative inquiry
- vocation and life purpose
- integration of emotional and academic intelligence
- integrative learning communities
- contemplation, spirituality, and religion in higher education
- cross-cultural competency
- major trends in research

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

The Contemplative Transformation of Higher Education

Arthur Zajonc, Professor, Amherst College and Director of the Academic Program, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

Mirabai Bush, Director, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

Bradford Grant (2000 Fellow), Chairperson and Endowed University Professor of Architecture, Hampton University

Mary Rose O'Reilley (1999 Fellow), Professor Emerita, University of St. Thomas

In an academic world dominated by “third-person” modes of inquiry that strive to keep what is studied at a “safe” distance, contemplative pedagogies and research methods affirm the importance of applying first-person techniques to what we are studying. Whether we are studying our own lives in the effort to broaden and deepen our awareness of ourselves or inquiring into the larger world in which we live, contemplative methods deepen our experience, insight, and understanding.

In this pre-conference day-long workshop participants examined the contribution of contemplative practice to teaching, learning, research, and student life. Participants were

introduced to writing and seeing practices integrated in curricular instruction by Contemplative Practice Fellows Bradford Grant and Mary Rose O'Reilley. **52 participants** attended the day-long workshop.

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Led by Center staff, advisors, fellows, and summer session participants

Contemplative Inquiry: The Contribution of Contemplative Mind to Integrative Education

Arthur Zajonc, Professor, Amherst College
Director of the Academic Program, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

The academy has well-articulated the role of critical reasoning, critical writing and quantitative analysis. In all fields, however, much depends on the slow development of mature judgment whether in the sciences, humanities, or the arts. One gradually gains not only technical competencies in a field, but aspires to make original contributions to it. The ability to “see” research questions, to hold the ambiguities and uncertainties associated with research, and develop the capacities required for insight: these are all qualities of a contemplative approach to knowledge. Using examples and exercises, participants explored the important contributions that contemplative inquiry and pedagogy can make to integrative knowing and learning.

Eros and Insight: Uncovering the Relationship between Love and Knowledge

Arthur Zajonc, Professor of Physics, Amherst College and Director of the Academic Program, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

On the basis of evidence from surveys and conferences, a significant community of teachers exists at all levels of higher education, from community colleges to research universities, who are using a wide range of contemplative practices as part of their classroom pedagogy. In addition to well-developed pedagogical and curricular methods

that school critical reasoning, critical reading and writing, and quantitative analysis, this presentation argues that we also require a pedagogy that attends to the development of reflective, contemplative, affective, and ethical capacities in our students. The significance of these is at least as great as the development of critical capacities in students. The rationale for the inclusion of contemplative modalities will be articulated within this context. On the basis of considerable experience in teaching at Amherst College, an “epistemology of love” emphasizes a form of inquiry that supports close engagement and leads to student transformation and insight. This approach to knowing is implemented in the Amherst College first-year course, *Eros and Insight*. It includes a specific sequence of contemplative exercises that are practiced by students and integrated with more conventional course content drawn from the arts and sciences. Our experience shows that students deeply appreciate the shift from conventional coursework to a more experiential, transformative, and reflective pedagogy.

The Contemplative Classroom and the Suffering World

Mirabai Bush, Director, Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

In architecture classes, students meditate on earth, air, fire, and water. In poetry classes, students sit in silence and then free write. In art history, students learn intimacy with objects. Law students learn deep listening. Media students bring contemplative awareness to deconstructing images of violence. Since 1997, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society in partnership with ACLS has sponsored academic fellows to develop courses incorporating a contemplative practice. In this session, participants discussed successful courses and heard ideas for new ones. We also explored the connection between the contemplative way of knowing and compassionate action in the world.

Establishing a Contemplative Program in the University

Charles Halpern, Chairman, Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

Harold Roth (1999 and 2005 Fellow), Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies and Director of Contemplative Studies, Brown University

Ed Sarath (1997 Fellow), Professor of Music and Director of Creativity and Consciousness Studies, University of Michigan

In the last decade meditation and other contemplative practices have become more widely accepted. An increasing number of students and faculty are exploring contemplative practices and a contemplative approach to work, life, and study. Some colleges and professional schools are beginning to bring contemplative practice into the classroom. This session will review innovations to date and focus on the ways that a university could develop the components of a contemplative program. Such an approach could attract a significant group of applicants. It could also have significant impact of atmosphere of the institution and the quality of life of all students, faculty, and administrators. The session touched on issues of diversity, religious preference, and the practical issues of managing the interface between the contemplative part of an academic program and the more traditional parts.

Contemplative Disciplines in the Turbulent Currents of Rapid Change Business

André Delbecq (1997 Fellow), McCarthy University Professor, Santa Clara University

Building from experience in teaching a seminar, "Spirituality for Organizational Leadership" to working professional MBAs and senior executives, André discussed patterns of prayer, meditation, and contemplative practice that have been adopted by organizational leaders in the technology complex of Silicon Valley.

He shared how these leaders see spiritual disciplines as central to their calling. These leaders

believe that without such practices leadership becomes distorted by hubris and greed and the courage to undertake the long journey into organizational transformation is abandoned due to burnout or cynicism. He discussed how they maintain and vary spiritual practices in face of travel and hectic schedules. The fruits these leaders report associated with their practices with special emphasis include greater inner peace when facing the daunting challenges of rapid-change organizational life, enhanced ability to listen to and involve others in strategic decision making, and the ability to achieve better life balance.

About thirty participants engaged in a vibrant discussion that included sharing of individual practices that paralleled or differed from the patterns reported on, the challenges of introducing students to such practices across the institutional and program diversity represented in the room, practical first steps for doing so, and the affirmation of the centrality of such practices for holistic learning.

Embodied Exercises to Deepen the Classroom Experience: Silence, Breath, and Cheerful Ears
Barbara Dilley (1997 Fellow), Professor, Naropa University

By bringing simple disciplines that integrate our body-mind to our classrooms, we support the possibility for the many layers of our being human to connect. Learning to enter silence through the four postures of mindfulness, giving time to feel our breath, and opening our ears without bias to the world can be used in any combination during some or all of our classes.

How to present experiential learning, embodied and non-threatening? One way is by using the theme of chairs as they are used in a conference and in our classrooms and let variations be the gift of possibility. Participants could take the metaphor of 'theme and variation' and apply it to their specific discipline...that was the hope. To begin, the chairs were arranged side by side and tight to the four walls. Then (second variation), the main task was to arrange all the chairs (while staying in

them!) equidistant from each other and the walls of the room and facing the 'space between'. Participants had three postures they could use in the chairs: classical two feet on the floor plus two other self created postures....some of the more adventurous ones turned their chairs over and nestled into the underside. Witnessing this section was wonderful...a living system in action! Third variation: create five circles of chairs (staying in them!) for sharing the experiential process. This was lively and animated...lots of grins and leaning in to hear one another. And finally, making a large circle of chairs for closing comments. Ah, a post-modern performance art piece created by the community in a hotel conference setting!

Bringing Contemplative Practice into the Visual Arts Curriculum

Deborah Haynes (2002 Fellow)
Professor of Art, Director of Libby Arts Residential Academic Program, University of Colorado – Boulder

The visual arts are often taught as a highly individualistic, fashion-driven enterprise. But what happens when students learn practices of observation and mindfulness in order to nurture their capacity for silence and solitude, as well as collaboration? Participants experimented with a few simple exercises (beholding, critical response, collage, eye-gazing, ink-shedding, and silent walking) and discussed strategies for deepening the relationship of contemplative practice and the visual arts.

Teaching as Quest: Are We Plowers of the Field or Conductors of the Orchestra?

Renee A. Hill (1999 Fellow and 2006 Summer Session Participant), Professor of Philosophy and Co-Director of the Institute for the Study of Race Relations, Virginia State University

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, a sacred text to Hinduism and some of the eastern philosophical systems, Krishna, an avatar of Lord Vishnu, tells his disciple, Arjuna, that he should be as a "plower of

the field,” who prepares his ground, sows his seed, and does all that he can do to bring forth a bountiful harvest, but then “surrenders the fruits” by serenely accepting whatever outcome ensues. Orchestra conductors, on the other hand, have a clear vision of what they want produced, and make the musicians practice and practice until the desired outcome envisioned by the conductor is reached. This paper will take up questions about teaching as “plowing the field.” Can you teach without having some investment in the outcome? Should you teach without having some investment in the outcome? Even if one is trying to see teaching simply as “offering” rather than as “molding,” surely there are goals guiding the presentation of materials and structuring of discussion? Would certain kinds of contemplative practices support the “plowing of the field” model more than others? Part of my struggle to situate myself in the teaching landscape and understand how to follow the most *dharmic* path to teaching, is wrestling with the framework in which I should embed my teaching; *Teaching as Quest* represents the outcome of those ruminations

Guerilla Contemplation: Introducing Contemplative Pedagogies into Unwelcoming Situations

Mary Rose O’Reilly (2000 Fellow), Professor Emerita, University of St. Thomas

Who could possibly have reservations about introducing contemplative practice into education? The political left may see it as a religious incursion; the political right may consider it suspiciously un-American; Protestants might suspect it's a Catholic thing; and Catholics might believe that contemplation is safely practiced only under monastic discipline. Each of these constituencies has a valid point, a perspective that may enrich our understanding of how subversive contemplative pedagogy is of the educational status quo. “Guerilla Contemplation” processed the real concerns educators may have about this enterprise and explore a multi-vocal, nuanced response.

Teaching and Research in Contemplative Studies: Priorities for the Development of a New Field

Harold Roth (1999 and 2005 Fellow), Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies, and Director of Contemplative Studies, Brown University

Contemplative Studies is an emerging academic field dedicated to studying consciousness and its potential through a comprehensive methodology that combines the objective and subject to give perspectives in a multidisciplinary approach embracing science (especially cognitive neuroscience), the humanities (especially philosophy, literature, and religious studies), and the creative arts. This session discussed the teaching of contemplative studies in higher education and the prospects for developing new and synergistic research in this field.

Improvisation, Creativity, and Consciousness: Jazz as Gateway to Interior Domains of Learning and Teaching

Ed Sarath (1997 Fellow), Professor of Music and Director of Creativity and Consciousness Studies, University of Michigan.

The jazz tradition boasts a long legacy of artists who have been involved in meditation and related practices to complement their creative excursions. Jazz’s improvisatory core—requiring the capacity to be fully present, integrate extraordinary technical expertise with freedom and flow, and listen deeply to fellow artists—is at the heart of this connection. The BFA in Jazz and Contemplative Studies curriculum at the University of Michigan and the UM Program in Creativity and Consciousness Studies have been inspired by these ideas. This session considered the underlying principles, obstacles, and opportunities associated with these initiatives.

***Exploring Stability and Transformation at
Smith College's School for Social Work***

Carolyn Jacobs, Dean, School for Social Work,
Smith College

Leadership that attends to the heart of the academy must clearly discern where vision unfolds in the intersections between the longings in the leader's heart and institutional needs. This session provided space for exploring the unfolding of vision as it attends to the need for institutional stability and transformation. Stability is not stagnation; it is holding carefully to the past as we live in the present and respond to the unfolding needs of the future. Transformation is concerned with multiple ways of knowing, thinking, and being in the process of responding. Engagement and steadfastness in dialogue are essential.

***A View from Religious Studies regarding
Spirituality in Higher Education***

Harold Roth (1999 and 2005 Fellow), Professor
of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies, and
Director of Contemplative Studies, Brown
University

Elizabeth Ursic, Professor of Religious Studies,
Mesa Community College

Religious Studies Departments are flourishing in all sectors of higher education: research universities, comprehensive universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges. As the reports from UCLA Higher Education Research Center have pointed out, students are increasingly interested in the study of their own religious and spiritual traditions as well as those of others. Perhaps no discipline wrestles more with how to academically approach spirituality in the classroom and in scholarship than Religious Studies. Participants dialogued with professors of Religious Studies from all sectors of higher education as they share their experiences and viewpoints on engaging spirituality in the classroom and in scholarship, as well as their commentary on the broader spirituality movement in higher education.

Education in an Integrative Age

David Scott, Former Chancellor, University of
Massachusetts Amherst

Susan Awbrey, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate
Education, Oakland University

Phyllis Fierro Robinson, Continuing Education
Instructor, Maui Community College

Discoveries in natural sciences and psychology, combined with knowledge of the world's spiritual traditions, are revealing an underlying unity in contrast to the fragmentation that has characterized epistemology since the time of the Western Enlightenment. These discoveries imply deep relations between our inner and outer experiences, between consciousness and the universe and between ethics and action. It suggests that we may be able to overcome the fragmentation that has characterized epistemology for hundreds of years, leading to an integrative world view that may be as transformative as the revolution ushered in with the birth of modern science. The session explored these developments and their implications for learning and action. Experiences with contemplative practice in the classroom as a means of enhancing this emerging integral cosmology will also be explored.

***Creating a Lighthouse Community: Uniting
Faculty through Dialogue***

Beverly Daniel Tatum
President, Spelman College

Veta Goler (2005 Summer Session Participant)
Professor of Dance and Chair of Drama and
Dance, Spelman College

How can college faculty and administrators change the culture of an institution so that people who are accustomed to using their intellect also engage their heart? How can an institution help people feel safe enough to be open about who they are? During the 2005-2006 academic year, Spelman College President Beverly Daniel Tatum hosted a series of dinners in which faculty of diverse backgrounds came together for conversations about themselves. These dinners—and spin-off faculty-hosted dinners—were remarkable for the deep and

heartfelt engagement they provoked. Beverly Daniel Tatum and faculty member Veta Goler, co-facilitators of this “Dinner and Dialogue” initiative, gave an interactive overview of these dinners that have begun changing Spelman’s culture.

Mentoring Critically Aware Spirituality and Commitment to the Common Good

Sharon Daloz Parks, Director, Leadership for the New Commons, Whidbey Institute

Why do college graduates so often fail to practice critical thought in today’s complex world? What happens when “the hidden curriculum of adult life” meets religious conviction? In a time of dramatic change, how do we mentor the next generations for the re-imagining of the common good? Building on three decades of research, teaching, and consulting in higher and professional education, this session explored perspectives integrating cognitive, affective, moral, and spiritual development and compelling implications for the vocation and practice of higher education.

On Re-Entering the Threshold of Our Being: Six Steps toward Contemplative Beholding

Joel Upton, Professor of Fine Arts, Amherst College

As one response to the habitual distance, if not estrangement, many may feel before works of art, each other, and the world, I have constructed a method of contemplative beholding. One academic application of this method, offered as an integrative seminar at Amherst College entitled, “The art of beholding,” seeks to define and engage both the “art,” or skill, of contemplative beholding and the “art” or wisdom such a beholding might provide. In this seminar, three distinct stages of “preparation,” “meditation” and “contemplation” lead toward a palpable, although elusive, encounter with an intimation of deepest reconciliation embodied by a given work of art as it is manifested in the pictorial gesture (“art”) left behind by that work’s artist. Success using this way of

approaching works of art, finally, as subject rather than setting upon them exclusively as object of possession, analysis or historical documentation, occurs in unexpected and yet remarkably vivid form, in which the experience itself confirms the theory. When and if such “art” appears, the objective work of art will have given way to a poetic perception of animated well-being and felt wholeness, comparable to devoted prayer.

Pedagogies of Compassion, Pedagogies of Lack

David Kahane (2005 and 2006 Summer Session Participant), Professor of Philosophy, University of Alberta

Many undergraduates combine an acute ethical and political sense – the feeling that much is wrong with the world and needs to be healed – with stressed responses to their pressured lives, and anxiety that they lack what their studies demand. This presentation explores pedagogies that link a desire to lessen suffering in the world with a more compassionate relationship to oneself. Drawing on experiences in *Philosophy 368: Global Justice, Obligation, and Compassion*, Kahane discusses how to weave together analytical and contemplative approaches in the classroom, in ways that not only enrich understandings of a subject matter (in this case, accounts of obligation toward the global poor), but allow students to notice their own embodied experiences of empathy and dissociation, and to discover new ways of connecting kindness toward the world with kindness toward themselves. Kahane contrasts pedagogies that cultivate a sense of lack with those that help students feel a sense of their own value, looking in particular at students’ performance with analytical and free writing. And he shows how the familiar apparatus of undergraduate courses – papers, deadlines, grades – can provide occasions for students to bring their attention to their own entrenched patterns, so as to open spaces of curiosity and even freedom.